

LAO BAO

Lao Bao is situated along Route QL 9 in sparsely populated, extreme northwestern Quang Tri Province, adjacent to the Laotian border and just 17 miles south of the DMZ (see 1:250,000 map). It lies 7 miles west of Lang Vei, site of the former US Special Forces - South Vietnamese military camp that was part of the South Vietnamese border-net monitoring infiltration (see 1:50,000 map). Although Lao Bao was completely destroyed before the January 1973 cease-fire, several small buildings were erected in the area in early 1973.

Now under Communist control, the Lao Bao area for years has been a channel for passage of NVA forces and materiel into South Vietnam and was heavily bombed during the Vietnam conflict. Much of the Communist infiltration through this general area was concentrated along the Ho Chi Minh Trail network in Laos, however, to the west of Lao Bao, and along trails, tracks, and roads funneling into Route 608, which intersects Route QL 9 about 13 miles east of Lao Bao. Lao Bao is not a good point for monitoring infiltration because of its low topographic position, the dense vegetation in the area, and the ground-hugging clouds that commonly persist for several days at a time during the rainy season.

Helicopter travel will provide the most efficient means of entry to Lao Bao. The old landing strips at Lao Bao, Lang Vei, and the two nearby airstrips across the border in Laos are all overgrown with scrub

vegetation and are not usable by fixed-wing aircraft (see Sketch Map). Resupply by air may be difficult as poor flying weather is common in this part of Vietnam throughout much of the year. Early morning flights may be impossible on many days during the November-to-April dry season as fog may not "burn-off" until mid-morning and may persist all day. Low-lying clouds, driving rain, strong winds, and thunderstorm turbulence during the May-to-October rainy season may force suspension of air operations on any given day.

Road access from the coastal city of Quang Tri, some 57 miles to the east, is by Route QL 1 to Dong Ha and then by Route QL 9 to Lao Bao (see 1:250,000 map). In the past, estimates of road travel time from Quang Tri varied from 3 to 12 hours, depending on road conditions and assuming all bridges were in place. Presently, travel along hard-surfaced Route QL 1 is blocked by several destroyed bridges and surface cratering, particularly northwest of Quang Tri. Similarly, numerous bridges have been destroyed on Route QL 9 between Dong Ha and Lang Kat; most of these bridges -- and the smaller bridges on Route QL 1 -- could be replaced or bypassed during the dry season without much delay. Repair of the 787-foot bridge spanning the Song Thach Han, west of the city of Quang Tri, however, would require a major engineering effort.

The French "macadamized" Route QL 9 between Dong Ha and Lao Bao, but the route has deteriorated to an all-weather laterite surface for most of its length. The road should support two-way traffic to a

point between Thon An Thai Thuong and Thon Son Lam; thereafter, it narrows in its extension to Lao Bao. Westward from Lang Kat, the road surface is markedly deteriorated, except for a short section near the Route 608 intersection, and may have only marginal all-weather capacity to Lao Bao.

Lao Bao is situated in the valley of the Xe Pon (River) at an elevation of about 690 feet (see photo). Steep-sloped terrain borders the valley with elevations of 1,600 feet in the immediate vicinity of Lao Bao. A dense double-canopied rainforest covers the less accessible, higher slopes that have not been cleared by slash-and-burn agriculture of the tribes. An almost continuous, single canopy forest, with trees 60 to 70 feet tall carpets the slopes of somewhat lower elevation; the forest floor is fairly clear of undergrowth. Both of these forest types almost preclude air observation and render ground surveillance difficult. Away from the steeper slopes the canopy is discontinuous with trees about 20 feet tall and numerous vines, shrubs, and some grassland occurring in areas previously cleared for slash-and-burn agriculture (shown as "Heavy Scrub" on Sketch Map). Offroad vehicular traffic in any of these forested areas is generally impossible, and personnel on foot will normally use one of the many trails in the area. Along streams, thick intertwining vegetation with many vines and exposed roots impedes movement; trees here are commonly 20 to 30 feet tall. Some bamboo thickets are also found along streams in this

area. (The 1:50,000 scale map erroneously depicts bamboo as being widespread in the Lao Bao area.) Several abandoned and now partly overgrown coffee plantations are located in the Lao Bao area.

Over 90 percent of the annual rainfall at Lao Bao normally falls during the wet season, May through October; each of the wettest months, July through September, has more than 13-1/2 inches of rain. (In contrast, Quang Tri has its greatest rainfall during the period September through January.) Although the days may be warm, or even hot, nights in the rainy season are often cold, and a lined field jacket, gloves, and head covering are recommended for comfort. During much of the dry season, the days are frequently hot, but nights are cool and long-sleeved shirts are needed. Rainfall during the heart of the dry season, December to February, is negligible. Occasional showers occur during March, April, and November, immediately before and after the rainy season.

The indigenous population in the Lao Bao area was comprised of Montagnards of the Bru tribe. Most of the tribals have fled either east and south to resettlement camps or westward into Laos where other Bru have lived. A few may still be located in isolated mountain villages, particularly to the southeast, and others may have recently returned to the area. The Bru engaged in slash-and-burn agriculture, hunted and fished, and many also worked as woodcutters. The only ethnic Vietnamese settlement previously reported in this part of Quang Tri Province was that at the district capital of Huong Hoa,

almost 12 miles east of Lao Bao along Route QL 9 (see 1:50,000 map).

Travel off major established routes in the Lao Bao area can be extremely hazardous because of numerous mines and bomb duds, and occasional booby traps, found throughout this area. Areas near former military installations along Route QL 9 are particularly dangerous as these were favorite locations for mine emplacement. Heavy mining also has been reported around the former Lang Vei military camp and Khe Sanh airfield, but the areal extent and current status of these mines is not known. Almost as dangerous as the mine fields is the especially virulent malaria endemic to this part of Vietnam. Apparently it may affect even some who have taken suppressant medications.

*BEST COPY
Available*

LAO BAO

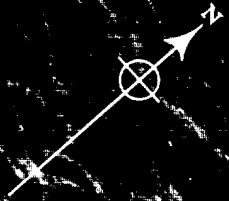
LAO BAO

Route QL 9

Xe Pon

Route QL 6

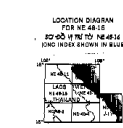
Lang Vei



STANDARD 1:500 AIR SHEET NO. 46-16 EDITION 4

REMARKS: THIS MAP IS A JOINT OPERATIONS GRAPHIC (AIR) AND IS NOT A NAVIGATIONAL CHART. IT IS NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION PURPOSES.

REMARKS: THIS MAP IS A JOINT OPERATIONS GRAPHIC (AIR) AND IS NOT A NAVIGATIONAL CHART. IT IS NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION PURPOSES.



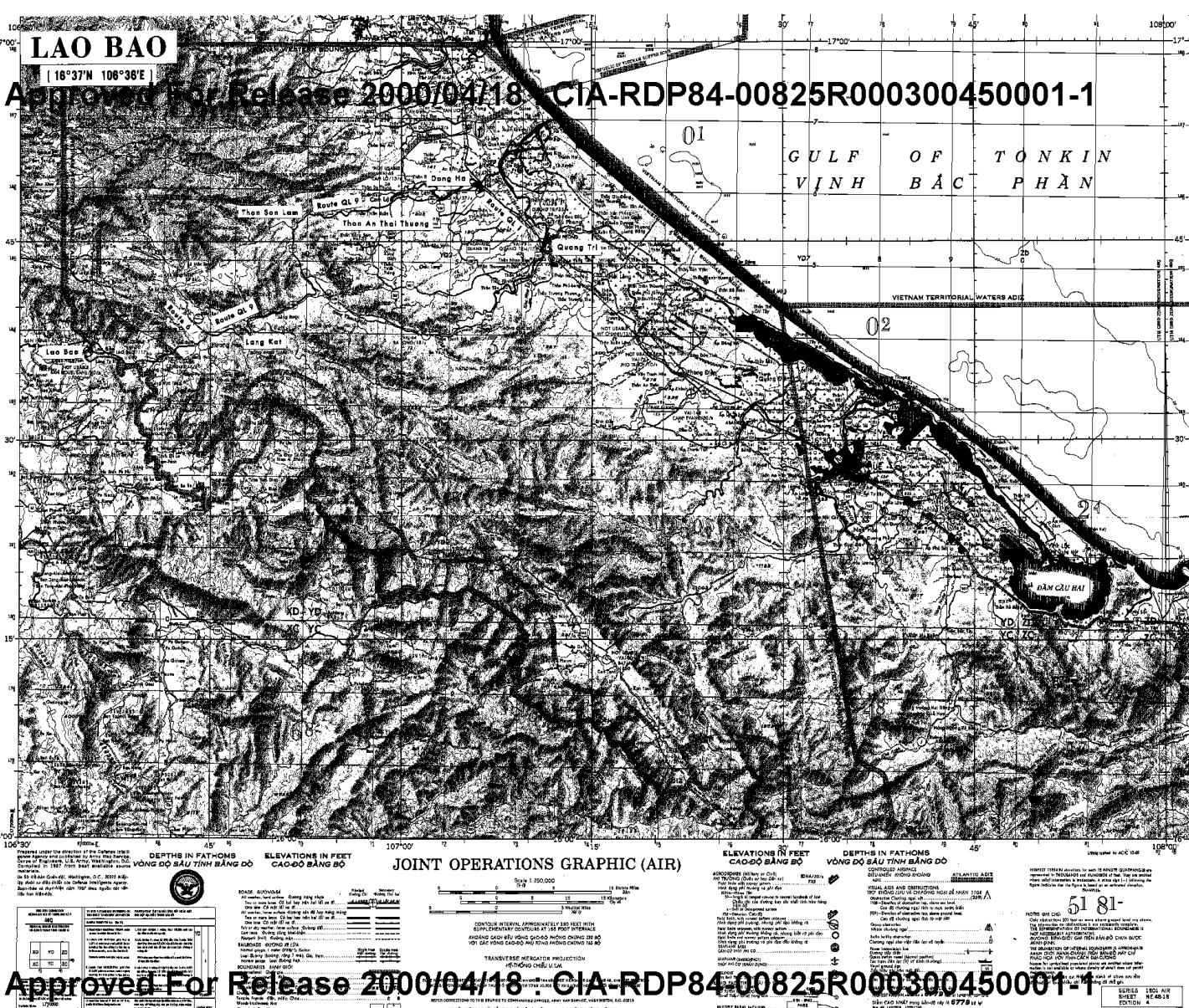
GLOSSARY

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z, AA, AB, AC, AD, AE, AF, AG, AH, AI, AJ, AK, AL, AM, AN, AO, AP, AQ, AR, AS, AT, AU, AV, AW, AX, AY, AZ, BA, BB, BC, BD, BE, BF, BG, BH, BI, BJ, BK, BL, BM, BN, BO, BP, BQ, BR, BS, BT, BU, BV, BW, BX, BY, BZ, CA, CB, CC, CD, CE, CF, CG, CH, CI, CJ, CK, CL, CM, CN, CO, CP, CQ, CR, CS, CT, CU, CV, CW, CX, CY, CZ, DA, DB, DC, DD, DE, DF, DG, DH, DI, DJ, DK, DL, DM, DN, DO, DP, DQ, DR, DS, DT, DU, DV, DW, DX, DY, DZ, EA, EB, EC, ED, EE, EF, EG, EH, EI, EJ, EK, EL, EM, EN, EO, EP, EQ, ER, ES, ET, EU, EV, EW, EX, EY, EZ, FA, FB, FC, FD, FE, FF, FG, FH, FI, FJ, FK, FL, FM, FN, FO, FP, FQ, FR, FS, FT, FU, FV, FW, FX, FY, FZ, GA, GB, GC, GD, GE, GF, GH, GI, GJ, GK, GL, GM, GN, GO, GP, GQ, GR, GS, GT, GU, GV, GW, GX, GY, GZ, HA, HB, HC, HD, HE, HF, HG, HH, HI, HJ, HK, HL, HM, HN, HO, HP, HQ, HR, HS, HT, HU, HV, HW, HX, HY, HZ, IA, IB, IC, ID, IE, IF, IG, IH, II, IJ, IK, IL, IM, IN, IO, IP, IQ, IR, IS, IT, IU, IV, IW, IX, IY, IZ, JA, JB, JC, JD, JE, JF, JG, JH, JI, JJ, JK, JL, JM, JN, JO, JP, JQ, JR, JS, JT, JU, JV, JW, JX, JY, JZ, KA, KB, KC, KD, KE, KF, KG, KH, KI, KJ, KK, KL, KM, KN, KO, KP, KQ, KR, KS, KT, KU, KV, KW, KX, KY, KZ, LA, LB, LC, LD, LE, LF, LG, LH, LI, LJ, LK, LL, LM, LN, LO, LP, LQ, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, LW, LX, LY, LZ, MA, MB, MC, MD, ME, MF, MG, MH, MI, MJ, MK, ML, MM, MN, MO, MP, MQ, MR, MS, MT, MU, MV, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NB, NC, ND, NE, NF, NG, NH, NI, NJ, NK, NL, NM, NN, NO, NP, NQ, NR, NS, NT, NU, NV, NW, NX, NY, NZ, OA, OB, OC, OD, OE, OF, OG, OH, OI, OJ, OK, OL, OM, ON, OO, OP, OQ, OR, OS, OT, OU, OV, OW, OX, OY, OZ, PA, PB, PC, PD, PE, PF, PG, PH, PI, PJ, PK, PL, PM, PN, PO, PP, PQ, PR, PS, PT, PU, PV, PW, PX, PY, PZ, QA, QB, QC, QD, QE, QF, QG, QH, QI, QJ, QK, QL, QM, QN, QO, QP, QQ, QR, QS, QT, QU, QV, QW, QX, QY, QZ, RA, RB, RC, RD, RE, RF, RG, RH, RI, RJ, RK, RL, RM, RN, RO, RP, RQ, RR, RS, RT, RU, RV, RW, RX, RY, RZ, SA, SB, SC, SD, SE, SF, SG, SH, SI, SJ, SK, SL, SM, SN, SO, SP, SQ, SR, SS, ST, SU, SV, SW, SX, SY, SZ, TA, TB, TC, TD, TE, TF, TG, TH, TI, TJ, TK, TL, TM, TN, TO, TP, TQ, TR, TS, TT, TU, TV, TW, TX, TY, TZ, UA, UB, UC, UD, UE, UF, UG, UH, UI, UJ, UK, UL, UM, UN, UO, UP, UQ, UR, US, UT, UU, UV, UW, UX, UY, UZ, VA, VB, VC, VD, VE, VF, VG, VH, VI, VJ, VK, VL, VM, VN, VO, VP, VQ, VR, VS, VT, VU, VV, VW, VX, VY, VZ, WA, WB, WC, WD, WE, WF, WG, WH, WI, WJ, WK, WL, WM, WN, WO, WP, WQ, WR, WS, WT, WU, WV, WW, WX, WY, WZ, XA, XB, XC, XD, XE, XF, XG, XH, XI, XJ, XK, XL, XM, XN, XO, XP, XQ, XR, XS, XT, XU, XV, XW, XX, XY, XZ, YA, YB, YC, YD, YE, YF, YG, YH, YI, YJ, YK, YL, YM, YN, YO, YP, YQ, YR, YS, YT, YU, YV, YW, YX, YY, YZ, ZA, ZB, ZC, ZD, ZE, ZF, ZG, ZH, ZI, ZJ, ZK, ZL, ZM, ZN, ZO, ZP, ZQ, ZR, ZS, ZT, ZU, ZV, ZW, ZX, ZY, ZZ

SCALE 1:250,000

SHEET NO. 46-16

EDITION 4



Approved For Release 2000/04/18 : CIA-RDP84-00825R000300450001-1

